

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION  
FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
May 23, 2007, 4:30 p.m.  
Council Chambers**

**PRESENT**

Trena Carter  
Ian Kohen  
Greg Lewis  
Rosalind Pegram  
John Roberts  
John Stroh

**ABSENT**

Tony McClendon  
Akua Ofori-Boateng  
Jay Myers  
Gil Palmer  
Jason Staley

The meeting was started as unofficial as a quorum was not present.

**VISITORS:**

Frank Souza and Douglas Moore.

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Director Arlette Tinsley, Deputy Director Lorraine Smith and Secretary, Lula Young.

**OTHER BUSINESS\SPECIAL PRESENTATION:**

Director Tinsley introduced Julie Morison, a researcher retained to complete a 10-month study on the barriers affecting Latino student graduation and achievement. Ms. Morison provided some background information concerning her research project, Logrando Secundaria. Ms. Morison advised that her research was made possible through a partnership of Su Casa-Columbus and The Center for Teaching and Learning and funded by the Irwin Financial Foundation.

The purpose of her research was to determine what the barriers are to Latino student's achievement and graduation here in Columbus, Indiana.

Ms. Morison utilized a PowerPoint presentation and handouts to share the results of her research including the student and family interviews, BCSC graduation rates, statistics, student challenges and expectations and her recommendations for action. Ms. Morison completed her presentation with a question and answer session then advised that a final report would be ready by the end of May.

**\*\*\* Meeting Called to Order \*\*\***

### **SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

Commissioner Lewis arrived during the Logrando Secundaria presentation. As there was now a quorum, Commissioner Roberts called the meeting to order for the Commission to conduct its official business. He then called roll. Commissioner Roberts asked if there were any corrections to the March Minutes.

**Commissioner Stroh moved to accept the March Minutes as submitted, Commissioner Lewis seconded. Motion carried.**

### **TREASURER'S REPORT:**

Secretary Young provided a summary of Annual dinner expenses and receipts as follows: Commission expenses totaled - \$5,154.14. Ticket sale receipts to date, \$5,395.00, leaving a balance of \$240.86.

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Director Tinsley advised Commissioners that she had received a request for financial support from Gwen Wiggins, President of the local chapter of the NAACP, to aid regional winner, Chaé Colbert in her participation in the national ACT-SO competition located in Detroit, Michigan in July. This is directly diversity-related as the ACT-SO competition is open to anyone.

**Commissioner Kohen moved to donate \$200.00 to Chaé Colbert to support her in her participation in the ACT-SO competition. Commissioner Stroh seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Director Tinsley informed Commissioners of two African-American gentlemen who recently visited the office, upset and wanting immediate action involving allegations of a hostile work environment. The director provided background relating to staff assisting one community member in filing a complaint of discrimination, approximately two years previously, with EEOC based on the legal definition of retaliation under federal law versus local/state law. EEOC, as part of their investigation strategy, performed an on-site visit at the former Rockwell Plant and caused additional racial tension in the workplace. After EEOC's visit, the two African-American employees allege that a noose was hung in a visible workspace as a form of intimidation. Historically, a hangman's noose being hung is a form of intimidation used for a long time in U.S. history and have been a part of racial harassment cases nationwide.

The deputy director affirmatively called EEOC and offered to process the complaint paperwork immediately or assist the gentlemen with other associated needs. The complainants have not chosen to use the Commission's services. The Deputy Director briefed the Director and the local president of the NAACP, Gwen Wiggins and a local pastor for one of the gentlemen. The Director briefed the Mayor and Police Chief. The police chief immediately sent detectives into the workplace.

Director Tinsley advised that President Gwen Wiggins called an emergency membership meeting of the NAACP and invited the Police Chief to attend. Chief Martin did attend the meeting and explained that sufficient evidence of a criminal complaint was not evident but the evidence of a strong civil suit was noted. The NAACP called a second meeting today at 5:15pm that Chairperson Palmer has chosen to attend. Director Tinsley reported that the complainants, with the assistance of the NAACP, were planning a press release and conference the following day. The Commission's policy on who functions as the authorized spokesperson for the Commission was reviewed.

Director Tinsley informed Commissioners of an upcoming mediation and advised Commissioners she anticipated the mediation to be scheduled in June. She then advised that a veteran mediator and former Commissioner may be asked to mediate the complaint and that in the case of observation, it would be preferable that only one person observe the process on this complaint.

Director Tinsley continued her report advising Commissioners that a debriefing of the annual dinner meeting would occur at the next full commission meeting and requested feedback and suggestions.

For her case update, Director Tinsley reported that she was processing ten (10) complaints from mobile home residents and as they are located in the county, all will be filed with HUD.

Director Tinsley reported had also provided training at both Clifty Creek Elementary and Northside Middle schools. Her announcements included inviting Commissioners to attend a BCSC graduation celebration for Latino students on May 30<sup>th</sup> at Mexico Viejo and advising Commissioners of the upcoming statewide training session for human rights commissions.

#### **ACTION ITEM: 45<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION:**

Director Tinsley reminded Commissioners that the Human Rights Commission is in its 45<sup>th</sup> year of existence so with the 2007 Annual Report to the community in April 2008, there is an opportunity to celebrate the 45 years of human rights enforcement in Columbus. Commissioners have the right and opportunity to shape the means of that celebration.

Director Tinsley provided options to observe the anniversary including a program on NPR called, 'Story Corps'. Story Corps is a service that will come to your community with a booth to facilitate and record one-on-one interviews. Discussion ensued surrounding researching the cost, which community members to consider for interviews, etc. Additional ideas brought forth by staff and Commissioners included a commemorative calendar using student artwork, daily spotlighting events in human rights in the 45 days leading up to the annual dinner; creating a small scholarship and beginning work on part 2 of the Oral History project.

As the vice-chairperson, Commissioner McClendon appoints members to sub-committees as the need arises. On his behalf, Director Tinsley asked for volunteers to serve on the 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Ad Hoc Committee. Commissioner Roberts volunteered. Commissioner Lewis also voiced an interest in initiating phase II of the Oral History project by communicating the opportunity to current high school juniors and discussing the possibility with Commissioner McClendon.

#### **ACTION ITEM: WELCOMING COMMUNITY COALITION:**

Commissioner Kohen provided an update on the Welcoming Community Coalition. He reported that he had attended a recent G/SA meeting where he attempted to get more information on the Coalition but his efforts were hindered due to several members of G/SA being in France.

Commissioner Kohen advised he was able to obtain an initial draft of the mission statement for the Welcoming Community Coalition and shared the document with fellow commissioners and staff. He went on to share the mission of the Coalition and advised that the group is trying to have a different presence in the community. The coalition is not just the membership of the G/SA and they intend to include PFlag from Seymour, local churches and other welcoming

organizations in the community with a plan to come together and have a welcoming community. The Unitarian Universalist and First Presbyterian are currently involved. The Coalition would like to have monthly events, the first being a one-man play in June. They are asking the Commission and other groups to support them as an organization.

Director Tinsley advised she is willing, as an individual, for her name to be listed as a member of the Welcoming Community Coalition and that it is for the board to decide if the Commission will support them as a group. Director Tinsley shared her conversation with Sondra Bolte regarding the Coalition. The mission is to pursue/continue the focus on being a welcoming community from a non-political perspective. The G/SA organization has a focus on lobbying. What the welcoming community coalition hopes to do is to have events and work with churches, the arts and community groups to further the welcoming community project. Discussion ensued covering a policy overview and acknowledgement of the Commission's duty to not create conflicts of interest. Commissioners agreed to obtain input from other board members before voting on whether to support the Welcoming Community Coalition as a group.

#### **LIAISON UPDATE – INTERFAITH FORUM:**

Commissioner Roberts advised that due to a change in work scheduling, he will no longer be able to attend the scheduled Interfaith Forum meetings and therefore resigned as liaison. Commissioner Lewis volunteered to fill that liaison position.

**Commissioner Roberts moved by a vote of affirmation that Commissioner Lewis replace Commissioner Roberts as the liaison to the Interfaith Forum, Commissioner Kohen seconded. Motion carried.**

#### **ADJOURN:**

**Commissioner Carter moved to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Lewis seconded. Meeting adjourned.**